1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

understanding. Of Gondi as spoken in the plateaux of the Central Provinces I had a smattering, but the Maria dialects were as different from it as Spanish and Portuguese from Italian, and the Hill Maria gutturals are beyond the compass of an English voice. Yet one cannot but acquire a considerable vocabulary and power of following the gist of a speech from constant hearing of witnesses in court and association with tribesmen in village and camp; and thus, though never able to dispense with an interpreter, I could check his interpretation of replies, and see that he put my questions in my own way, and not in a leading form. Nothing needs more care than the training of interpreters. I am especially grateful for the help, as interpreter and as enquirer, of the late Circle Inspector Chaitan Singh, of the State Police, a Bastar Rajput with all the traditional virtues of the Rajput. Descended from an ancestor who had once narrowly escaped being sacrificed as a Meriah victim in Jeypore (Orissa), he was passionately interested in the aboriginal, knew all the '36' languages of Bastar, was a mine of information about Bastar customs, religions, songs, dances and games, and was, because he never did an injustice but was simple and reliable in all his ways, loved by the wild tribes of Bastar. His sense of humour, broad like that of the tribesmen, of whom at heart he was one, would overcome disappointment or the short temper bred of heat and exhaustion in gales of laughter; nor was it a respecter of persons, for his tales would chide the follies alike of raja or ryot, political agent or diwan. His sudden death soon after I left Bastar meant the loss of a dear friend, and of an Indian of a type more fitted to a past age but unlikely to be bettered in any succeeding generation. They say that in the forests around Kondagaon, where he shot so many man-eating tigers and organized so many successful tiger beats, the Murias already revere him as Chaitan Deo, a god of good hunting without whose favour no beat will yield game. Nothing could have appealed more to his sense of humour. Wherever he may be, may he have boon companions to laugh at his rhymes and tales, to drink from his silver glass, to take betel from his silver box, and to handle the hunting-knife and the silver-mounted cane given him by successive Governors, and may he live long in the folk memories of Bastar!

For other help I must thank Mr. K. L. B. Hamilton, C.I.E., I.C.S., Political Agent for the Central Provinces States when I went to Bastar, who has also kindly allowed me to reproduce some of his Bastar photographs; Mr. D. R. Rutnam, I.C.S., my successor as Administrator, who was my host in Bastar twice in 1932 and greatly facilitated my 1934 tour in various ways; Dr. W. P. S. Mitchell, M.B.E., for more than twenty years Chief Medical Officer

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

● 124 I have always been annoyed by the use of the words 'always', 'commonly', 'universally', 'rarely' in anthropological literature, and even though I have used them often enough myself, I have longed for more precision of statement. This dissatisfaction drove me to prepare a questionnaire about some of those matters on which Westermarck and Briffault, for example, make their most confident assertions. I decided that out of a population of a little over 100,000, a sample of 2,000 cases would not be regarded as insufficient even by mathematicians. I had forms printed at the Jagdalpur Press and questions were asked by members of my party under my close supervision. I believe that the results of this inquiry are among the most valuable conclusions of this book. There must always be a margin of error, but on the whole I believe that a high degree of accuracy has been obtained. It is possible, I know, to lie convincingly by statistics more easily than by any other method, but in the realm of social anthropology I must confess to a great feeling of relief, when instead of having to say, for example, 'The institution of the marriage by service (Lamhada) is not very common' I can observe that 'Out of 2,000 cases examined only 113 were Lamhada'.

000 All the photographs in this book were taken by me except Plates LIX-LXV which were given me by Dr C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (my own Bondo and Gadaba pictures were not ready in time) and Plate CV which was made specially by Mr F. Berko from specimens collected by Mr Shamrao Hivale. I used a Contax camera with a 5 cm. Sonnar lens for ordinary work and an 8·5 cm. Triotar for long-distance and close-ups. Developing and enlargements were done by Messrs Kodak, Bombay, whose staff showed great interest in my work and at all times gave me every consideration.

With a few exceptions (Figs. 123-4, 127-9) all the line-drawings in the text are by Mr R. F. Motofram, for whose work I cannot sufficiently express my admiration and who is responsible not only for the drawings but also for the beautiful colour-plates and for some improvements in the half-tones. Most of the drawings were made from specimens collected by me and taken down to Bombay, but Figs. 20, 22, 30, 44, 45 and 46 were drawn from my own photographs, Fig. 38 from a photograph given me by Mr G. F. Ramsden, C.I.E., I.C.S., and Fig. 40 from a photograph by Dr C. von Fürer-Haimendorf. Figs. 34-9, 41, 76, 116 and 137 were copied from books and journals; acknowledgements will be found in the text.

It was A. E. Housman's ambition that one day a copy of *The Shropshire Lad* taken into battle should stop a bullet aimed at a soldier's heart. I have a similar desire for this, as for all my other books, that in the battle for existence which the Indian aboriginal now has to wage, it may protect him from some of the deadly shafts of exploitation, interference and repression that civilization so constantly launches at his heart. If this book does anything to help the Muria to continue as they are today, happy, free and innocent, I shall be content.

V.E.

Patangarh Village
Mandla District, India
11 July 1942

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

127 these were not kept at the headquarters of the State, but
121 distributed in the police stations and many of them had been eliminated. But the State Superintendent of Police called in as many aboriginal files as could be found, and again after much sifting I found myself with exactly 50 unselected Bison-horn Maria suicide records. These extended over a period of 10 years.

114 Between 1935 and 1942 I made many tours in this enchanting land among these enchanting people. On the earlier tours I was accompanied by my friend Mr Shamrao Hivale whose amazing sympathy and insight helped me to catch my first vision of Maria culture. Later I had the support of my wife who, being herself a Gond, was able to get quickly in touch with the people and immediately established a friendly atmosphere. Particularly in the later tours I tried to see as many scenes of violence as possible, to talk to released convicts and to discover the general attitude of a village towards any crime that had been committed within its boundaries. In Aranpur I stood beside the still warm ashes of the ritually-cremated clothes of Barse Chewa who had recently been hanged in jail. At Khutepal, I watched Oyami Masa's children playing on the very floor once stained by the blood of his murdered wife. In the forest near Jabeli
[211] I had a clearing made so that I could photograph the carved pillar erected in memory of a famous murderer. In Rewali I was visited by a ferocious-looking youth who had twice stood on trial for his life and had twice preserved it. Here too I talked with Hevala Bakka who killed his wife for infidelity and was now unable to get another. In Doriras I saw the
[164] grave of the murdered Boti which had been desecrated by Ghasia for the sake of the purse of money which had been buried to help the dead man on his journey to the other world. In the same village I visited the home of Kawasi Borga then serving a life sentence, and talked to his fine sons and his sad pathetic wife.

124 Later I spent many hours in the Jagdalpur Jail talking to Maria who were serving terms of life-imprisonment for homicide. Some of them were as informative as the limits of their psychology allowed, for it must always be remembered that aboriginals are not accustomed to discussing those matters which are of special interest to anthropologists. Other

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

prisoners clearly suspected some trick and told me very little. On the whole I was impressed by the great sadness of their life, even though in the jail they are well and kindly treated. Most of them, I think, felt that an inexplicable tragedy had befallen them. They did not feel like criminals. Their lives had been destroyed by a capricious destiny.

It was naturally more difficult to get information about the suicides, for, in the nature of the case, the person of most interest could not be present to tell his story. Relatives also and the villagers were more reticent, I thought, in discussing this subject, possibly because they feared that any revelations might lead to further police investigation. But even so I was able to get a certain amount of information about the Maria's attitude to self-murder.

But enquiries among the Maria are never easy. The people say that, as a result of Mr Grigson's investigations when he was writing his book on the tribe, their villages have suffered an invasion of man-eating tigers. In one village where I myself took photographs it was declared afterwards that I had made all the women barren. The Maria are friendly people, and I was able to make many friends among them. But particularly on matters which have a police reference they are naturally inclined to be secretive and prefer to claim ignorance rather than by confiding in the investigator perhaps expose themselves to later difficulties. Moreover, there is undoubtedly throughout aboriginal India a belief that talking about tribal affairs may anger the ancestors of the clan or disturb some godling's peace of mind. It is said of Korava children, members of a criminal tribe in Mysore, that they are taught from infancy to say 'I do not know' in reply to questions put to them.[1] Many Maria adopt the same attitude.

The presence of my wife, whom everyone (incorrectly) regarded as a Maria but who has a Maria name, was of great assistance in removing suspicion, as was the fortunate chance that I always go barefoot in the villages. I learnt later that the Maria believe that one reason why the crops are so poor nowadays is that officials defile Mother Earth by trampling on her with their shoes. 'At first,' they said, 'when anyone

[1] L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, *The Mysore Tribes and Castes* (Mysore, 1930), Vol. III, p. 612.

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
AW32 Gond AW32

114 live side by side with Kolams as well as with non-aboriginal settlers, then climbed to the higher plateau and were fortunate enough to watch a clan-god feast at Pangri. On our way from Pangri to Utnur we passed Marlavai and decided on this village as our future base-camp. Early [54] in February we went to the Kesiapur Jatra, a great Gond feast and fair, held annually fifteen miles north-west of Utnur. From there we turned north and then east into Rajura Taluq, where we visited tht famous fort of Manikgarh, now deserted and overgrown by jungle. Camping in [129] various villages of the higher plateau we gathered piecemeal information from both Gonds and Kolams, and by the end of our tour realized that a study of the aboriginals of Adilabad might lead to the very heart of the Gond problem.

123 A slightly embarrassing circumstance during our first tour was the rapidly spreading rumour that I was a recruiting officer and had come to take young Gonds to the war. The general excitement following the Japanese invasion of Malaya, had reached even the Gonds and they interpreted my taking of notes and photographs as a preliminary selection of all the fittest men. And when at the same time the Director-General of Revenue visited Adilabad and Utnur, they took our tours for a concerted movement and thought the lorries with his camp-kit were meant to carry off the recruits. Many hid in the forest and the fields when we passed by and in the villages it was difficult to establish confidence.

But once settled in Marlavai in a house built in Gond style just outside the village, we were soon faced by a difficulty of exactly the opposite nature. For now rumour ran that I was a revenue officer, specially sent to the District to investigate the grievances of Gonds, Kolams and Naikpods, and to give land to all those whom the influx of new settlers had rendered landless. All through the hot weather and the greater part of the rains aboriginals from all parts of the district, some in delegations of thirty and forty, flocked to Marlavai, all wanting their difficulties heard and remedied. Unable to give them any concrete assistance, I had at least to listen to their tales of woe, and many a day passed when the only anthropological information swelling my note-books was the distressingly monotonous account of a culture-contact resulting invariably in the expropriation and economic enslavement of the aboriginal.[1]

114 From March to the middle of December Marlavai was our headquarters, but several tours led us to the surrounding villages and ultimately to the Tilani area as far as Rompalli and Mangi. We left the district at Christmas and returned again early in March 1940, when we toured the taluqs of Both, Kinwat and Adilabad, reaching Marlavai in the middle of April. While in Hyderabad I had succeeded in obtaining the sanction of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government for a Gond Education

1. A full account of the conditions then prevailing in the Adilabad District is contained in my reports and diaries published under the title *Tribal Hyderabad* by the Revenue Department, Government of H.E.H. the Nizam, Hyderabad 1945.